

# News

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## **AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGES IN CALIFORNIA: FIRST QUARTER 2005**

**Contra Costa leads large counties with 5.0 percent wage increase;**

**Counties in the San Francisco Bay Area are the highest paid**

In the first quarter of 2005, average weekly wages in Contra Costa County rose by 5.0 percent over the year, the largest increase among California's 26 large counties with employment of 75,000 or more, according to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics. Among the 322 large counties nationwide, Contra Costa County's wage growth ranked 19<sup>th</sup>. Regional Commissioner Richard J. Holden noted that 22 of the 26 large counties in California experienced wage growth over the year.

The State's top six counties in wages were all located in the San Francisco area; four of these-- Santa Clara County, San Francisco County, San Mateo County and Contra Costa County--had wage levels exceeding \$1,000 in the first quarter of 2005. (See table 1.) Santa Clara County's wage, at \$1,372, was the highest in California and 4<sup>th</sup> highest nationwide.

### Wage Levels

Weekly wages in California averaged \$872 in the first quarter of 2005, a 2.0-percent increase over the year. While California's wage growth was close to the nation's 2.2- percent increase, the State's wage level was 12.5 percent higher than the U.S. average of \$775. California had the seventh highest average weekly wage level in the nation. (See table 2.)

Among the 26 largest counties in California, three ranked among the nation's top ten in wages -- Santa Clara (\$1,372), San Francisco (\$1,368), and San Mateo (\$1,220). Santa Clara's average weekly wage was 77.0 percent above the national average, ranking fourth among the 322 large counties, while average weekly wages in San Mateo and San Francisco ranked fifth and tenth, respectively. Three other San Francisco area counties (Alameda, Contra Costa, and Marin) placed in the top 40 nationally. Overall, 11 of these California counties had wages above the U.S. average. The counties of Tulare and Fresno, which have a high concentration of agricultural employment, recorded the lowest average weekly wages in California (\$530 and \$600 respectively).

Average weekly wages were higher than the national average of \$775 in 101 of the largest 322 U.S. counties. New York County, N.Y., held the top position among the highest-paid large counties with an average weekly wage of \$2,025. Fairfield County, Conn., was second with an average weekly

wage of \$1,613, followed by Suffolk, Mass. (\$1,390), Santa Clara, Calif. (\$1,372), and San Francisco, Calif. (\$1,368).

Four of the ten counties with the highest wages in the U.S. were located in or around the greater New York metropolitan area (New York, N.Y., Fairfield, Conn., Somerset, N.J., and Hudson, N.J.), three others were located in the San Francisco metropolitan area (Santa Clara, San Francisco, and San Mateo), while two more were located in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area (Arlington, Va. and Washington, D.C.). Rounding out the top 10 was Suffolk County, Mass., part of the Boston area.

There were 220 large counties with an average weekly wage below the national average in the first quarter of 2005. Cameron County, Texas reported the lowest wage at \$460, followed by the counties of Hidalgo, Texas (\$463), Horry, S.C. (\$479), Webb, Texas (\$490), and Yakima, Wash. (\$516). The average weekly wage in the lowest-paid county, Cameron, was less than one-quarter the wage in the highest-paid county, New York, N.Y.

### Over-the-Year Wage Changes

Ten of California's 26 large counties recorded wage growth greater than the national increase of 2.2 percent in the first quarter of 2005. Contra Costa County's 5.0-percent increase was the largest in the State and ranked 19<sup>th</sup> in the nation, followed by Ventura County's 4.5-percent gain which ranked second in the State and 26<sup>th</sup> in the nation. In contrast, Marin County recorded a 5.6-percent decline in wages, the greatest wage decrease among the large counties in California; it was followed by Santa Cruz County where wages declined 2.4 percent.

From the first quarter 2004 to the first quarter 2005, the national average weekly wage rose by 2.2 percent. Among the largest counties, Collier, Fla., led the nation in wage growth, with an increase of 10.7 percent over the year. Cumberland, Pa., was second with a 9.3-percent increase, followed by the counties of Hudson, N.J., (9.0 percent), Henrico, Va. (8.4 percent), and Fairfield, Conn., and Rock Island, Ill. (7.7 percent each).

Thirty-five counties experienced over-the-year declines in average weekly wages. Clayton County, Ga., had the largest decrease, -6.0 percent, followed by the counties of Marin, Calif. (-5.6 percent), Hamilton, Ind. (-4.3 percent), McLean, Ill. (-2.8 percent), and St. Louis, Minn. (-2.7 percent).

### Technical Note

Average weekly wage data by county are compiled under the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) program, also known as the ES-202 program. The data are derived from reports submitted by employers subject to state and federal unemployment insurance (UI) laws. The 8.5 million employer reports cover 129.8 million full- and part-time workers. The average weekly wage is computed by dividing the total quarterly payroll of employees covered by UI programs by the average monthly number of these employees. This number then is divided by 13, the number of weeks in a quarter. It is to be noted, therefore, that over-the-year wage changes for geographic areas may reflect shifts in the composition of employment by industry, occupation, and such other factors as hours of work. Thus, wages may vary among counties, metropolitan areas, or States for reasons other than changes in the average wage level. Data for all states, Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs), counties, and the nation are available on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/>; however, data in QCEW press releases have been revised (see Note below) and will not match the data contained on the Bureau's

Web site.

### **Additional statistics and other information**

An annual bulletin, *Employment and Wages*, features comprehensive information by detailed industry on establishments, employment, and wages for the nation and all states. The 2004 edition of this bulletin contains selected data produced by Business Employment Dynamics (BED) on job gains and losses, as well as selected data from the fourth quarter 2004 version of this news release.

*Employment and Wages Annual Averages, 2004* will be available for sale in early 2006 from the United States Government Printing Office, Superintendent of Documents, P.O. Box 371954, Pittsburgh, PA 15250, telephone 866-512-1800, outside Washington, D.C. Within Washington, D.C., the telephone number is 202-512-1800. The fax number is 202-512- 2104. Also, the 2004 bulletin will be available in a portable document format (PDF) on the BLS Web site at <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewbultn04.htm>.

QCEW-based news releases issued by other regional offices have been placed at one convenient Web site location, <http://www.bls.gov/cew/cewregional.htm>.

Information in this release will be made available to sensory impaired individuals upon request. Voice phone: 202-691-5200; TDD message referral phone number: 1-800-877-8339.

For personal assistance or further information on the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages Program, as well as other Bureau programs, contact the San Francisco Information Office at 415-975-4350 from 9:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. PT.

## **NOTE**

QCEW data are the sums of individual establishment records reflecting the number of establishments that exist in a county or industry at a point in time. For this reason, county and industry data are not designed to be used as a time series. The preliminary QCEW data presented in this release may differ from data released by the individual states as well as from the data presented on the BLS Web site. The potential differences result from several causes. Differences between BLS and State published data may be due to the continuing receipt, review and editing of UI data over time. On the other hand, differences between data in this release and the data found on the BLS Web site are the result of adjustments made to improve over-the-year comparisons. Specifically, these adjustments account for administrative (noneconomic) changes such as a correction to a previously reported location or industry classification. Adjusting for these administrative changes allows users to more accurately assess changes of an economic nature (such as a firm moving from one county to another or changing its primary economic activity) over a 12-month period. Currently, adjusted data are available only from BLS press releases.

**Table 1. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages in the 26 largest counties in California, first quarter 2005<sup>2</sup>**

County	Employment		Average Weekly Wage <sup>3</sup>			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2004-05 <sup>4</sup>	Average Weekly Wage	National ranking by level <sup>5</sup>	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05 <sup>4</sup>	National ranking by percent change <sup>5</sup>
United States <sup>6</sup> .....	129,802.3	1.7	\$775	-	2.2	-
California.....	15,064.5	1.9	872	7	2.0	26
Santa Clara, CA.....	850.1	1.0	1,372	4	2.1	141
San Francisco, CA.....	519.9	0.7	1,368	5	3.8	37
San Mateo, CA.....	325.0	-0.5	1,220	10	1.2	206
Contra Costa, CA.....	338.4	0.2	1,021	22	5.0	19
Alameda, CA.....	674.5	0.1	997	28	2.9	86
Marin, CA.....	108.1	0.8	933	40	-5.6	312
Orange, CA.....	1,477.6	2.3	893	50	2.2	131
Los Angeles, CA.....	4,051.2	-0.1	864	57	2.0	148
Ventura, CA.....	313.6	1.3	861	58	4.5	26
Sacramento, CA.....	616.9	2.3	855	62	2.5	111
San Diego, CA.....	1,282.1	1.2	816	74	1.4	194
Placer, CA.....	133.5	3.6	749	125	3.5	50
Sonoma, CA.....	187.8	0.0	737	133	3.7	41
Santa Barbara, CA.....	179.5	0.3	733	134	3.7	41
Santa Cruz, CA.....	92.3	1.0	723	144	-2.4	307
Solano, CA.....	127.4	1.9	715	152	0.1	271
Yolo, CA.....	96.4	1.2	704	163	4.3	29
Monterey, CA.....	157.7	0.6	697	169	3.0	83
San Bernardino, CA.....	627.1	4.9	654	221	0.8	240
Kern, CA.....	249.0	3.5	652	227	0.0	275
Riverside, CA.....	598.4	5.2	652	227	0.9	230
San Joaquin, CA.....	215.4	1.3	638	246	-0.6	289
Stanislaus, CA.....	169.5	4.0	635	248	1.0	221
San Luis Obispo, CA.....	101.3	0.8	621	262	2.1	141
Fresno, CA.....	324.6	2.6	600	275	1.4	194
Tulare, CA.....	133.2	2.5	530	315	1.0	221

<sup>1</sup> Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

<sup>2</sup> Data are preliminary.

<sup>3</sup> Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

<sup>4</sup> County percent changes were computed from quarterly employment and pay data adjusted for noneconomic county reclassifications.

<sup>5</sup> Ranking does not include the county of San Juan, Puerto Rico.

<sup>6</sup> Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

**Table 2. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages by state, first quarter 2005<sup>2</sup>**

Area	Employment		Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2004-05	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
United States <sup>4</sup> .....	129,802.3	1.7	\$775	--	2.2	--
Alabama.....	1,871.5	2.0	642	32	2.6	16
Alaska.....	290.3	2.0	744	18	1.5	37
Arizona.....	2,459.7	5.0	698	23	2.3	22
Arkansas.....	1,144.8	1.7	579	46	2.8	11
California.....	15,064.5	1.9	872	7	2.0	26
Colorado.....	2,158.6	2.4	787	11	2.2	24
Connecticut.....	1,624.7	0.8	1,084	3	3.9	3
Delaware.....	407.9	1.2	878	6	4.0	2
District of Columbia....	661.7	1.1	1,277	1	4.2	1
Florida.....	7,731.0	3.5	679	26	3.5	7
Georgia.....	3,877.0	1.5	742	19	1.9	30
Hawaii.....	597.6	3.1	669	28	2.0	26
Idaho.....	594.2	4.2	561	47	1.6	36
Illinois.....	5,644.9	0.5	848	8	2.9	10
Indiana.....	2,838.7	1.1	667	30	0.9	47
Iowa.....	1,419.5	1.9	616	37	1.7	33
Kansas.....	1,290.7	0.9	631	34	1.4	41
Kentucky.....	1,741.2	1.8	628	35	0.6	51
Louisiana.....	1,873.8	0.6	619	36	2.8	11
Maine.....	573.2	-0.5	614	38	1.7	33
Maryland.....	2,458.0	1.1	831	9	2.0	26
Massachusetts.....	3,094.8	0.1	964	4	1.2	44
Michigan.....	4,218.3	-0.4	780	13	1.2	44
Minnesota.....	2,559.7	1.3	783	12	0.8	49
Mississippi.....	1,113.1	1.3	545	49	2.3	22
Missouri.....	2,644.2	1.8	671	27	0.9	47
Montana.....	403.8	3.2	533	51	3.5	7
Nebraska.....	879.8	1.5	600	42	0.8	49
Nevada.....	1,187.6	6.7	714	21	2.6	16
New Hampshire.....	606.9	0.8	745	17	2.8	11
New Jersey.....	3,863.5	0.8	963	5	1.8	32
New Mexico.....	765.0	2.2	596	43	2.1	25
New York.....	8,242.3	0.8	1,096	2	3.7	6
North Carolina.....	3,808.0	2.3	687	24	2.7	14
North Dakota.....	320.4	2.6	550	48	1.5	37
Ohio.....	5,228.6	0.4	706	22	2.0	26
Oklahoma.....	1,453.9	2.5	591	44	1.9	30
Oregon.....	1,621.6	4.2	685	25	1.5	37
Pennsylvania.....	5,481.0	1.0	747	16	1.5	37
Rhode Island.....	466.9	0.5	736	20	1.2	44

See footnotes at end of table.

**Table 2. Covered<sup>1</sup> employment and wages by state, first quarter 2005<sup>2</sup> (Continued)**

Area	Employment		Average weekly wage <sup>3</sup>			
	March 2005 (thousands)	Percent change, March 2004-05	Average weekly wage	National ranking by level	Percent change, first quarter 2004-05	National ranking by percent change
South Carolina.....	1,800.3	1.5	611	39	2.5	18
South Dakota.....	365.1	2.0	544	50	2.4	20
Tennessee.....	2,665.2	1.8	660	31	1.4	41
Texas.....	9,454.6	2.2	760	15	3.1	9
Utah.....	1,091.9	3.9	607	40	1.3	43
Vermont.....	297.5	0.9	639	33	3.9	3
Virginia.....	3,525.7	2.4	794	10	2.7	14
Washington.....	2,702.3	2.6	766	14	2.4	20
West Virginia.....	683.6	1.1	583	45	2.5	18
Wisconsin.....	2,687.0	1.4	668	29	1.7	33
Wyoming.....	246.2	3.0	606	41	3.9	3
Puerto Rico.....	1,048.2	1.4	433	(5)	3.3	(5)
Virgin Islands.....	44.2	2.1	650	(5)	13.4	(5)

<sup>1</sup> Includes workers covered by Unemployment Insurance (UI) and Unemployment Compensation for Federal Employees (UCFE) programs.

<sup>2</sup> Data are preliminary.

<sup>3</sup> Average weekly wages were calculated using unrounded data.

<sup>4</sup> Totals for the United States do not include data for Puerto Rico or the Virgin Islands.

<sup>5</sup> Data not included in the national ranking.